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Impact of Social Stereotypes on the Perception of Siberia by the Inhabitants of European Russia in the XIX-th Century

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The paper deals with the formation of perception stereotypes of Siberia by the population of the European part of Russia, shows the influence of stereotypes on the establishment of social and psychological relationships between different social groups. These issues are analyzed on the example of V.G. Korolenko, whose works most clearly reflected in figurative Siberia stereotype of the author and the people who surrounded him during his political exile at the end of XIX century.

Keywords: exile, culture, Russia, Siberia, the stereotypes, V.G Korolenko.

The history of development of communication links between the European part of Russia and Siberian region has represented a great interest for researchers. Relying on “the norms of ethics, morality, and rectitude and implementing within the standard rules of etiquette”, the communication helped to identify distinctive and unique features of interacted cultures, influenced the forms of their mutual stereotype perception. (Remizov, 2011: 31). A diversity of specific features in its development has made Siberia attractive as a special social and cultural aspect. It used to have an aura of unpredictability and incomprehensibility, the monumental might and vigour. This has a special impact on how Siberia was stereotyped in the cultural and psychological aspects, and it formed an image perception of the region in the minds of the Russian European part inhabitants. Lack of awareness about the lifestyle

of Siberia its dissimilitude and difference from traditional knowledge available about the region led to a cultural and psychological gap between the inhabitants of the central part Russia and Siberia. Formation of this distance was facilitated not only by the differences in lifestyle, but also by different religious consciousness of region inhabitants. As it has been noted by a number of researchers, if Siberian people was slightly religious and had “their own particular outlook on life”, the settlers from the Russian provinces “had the higher religious and moral consciousness” (Lityagina, 2006: 120). Immigrants from Central Russia to Siberia were mostly peasants, “basic characteristic of whom was the deep religiosity. It reflected the world outlook and views of peasants to life... moral norms that are passed on from generation to generation” (Sinyakina, 2011: 99).

And if geographically Russia and Siberia were considered an organic whole in cultural and psychological terms they kept identifying “friend-or-foe”. For a visitor travelling into Siberia, the territory up to the Urals border was identified as a “friend territory” whereas the territory behind the Urals was recognized as alien, unfamiliar, “foe” territory. G. Kennan, an American traveller, who visited Siberia in the 80s of the XIX-th century describes his experience. “A quadrangular pillar, built of brick, with the coat of arms of a European province Perm fixed on the one side and that of the Siberian province of Tobolsk fixed on the opposite side of it was seen as the boundary; the “Siberian Boundary Stone”. G. Kennan writes that “no other territory in Russia had invoked so much curiosity in a traveller, as this little forest glade, with the stone pillar, consecrated with grief and human misery. No other border pillar in the whole world had witnessed so much grief, such severe hardship as this one, the countless broken-hearted creatures had passed it ...one were completely fraught with sorrow, others -seeking consonance in tears; the third prostrating biting the dust of their motherland and kissing the cold stone pillar, as if it was the symbol of all the most dearest, that they had left once...” Having crossed the border, people “had to part with the Motherland, and with love” (Kennan, 1906: 32). Emotionally-coloured stereotypical perception destructive philosophy of thinking often proved to be much stronger than logical reasoning.

However, being a part of Russia, Siberia was naturally involved in a nationwide cultural interaction. The cultural interaction between the center and the region was carried out by people who due to various life circumstances found themselves into Siberia. Among them were those who came voluntarily to work in a province, but the vast majority were criminals and those convicted for political reasons. Only in the Yenisei province the total number of convicts as

on January 1, 1908 amounted to 50,163 (Statistical Review, 1908: 78). Study of the process of cross-cultural interaction, “arising during the relations of the migrant and the host country”, reveals the principles of co-existence of different ethnic and social groups. During the migratory movement in the human mind there is the start of the process of identification of cultural differences, the function of culture translation, definitions of the rules of behavior between migrants and the host cultural environment (Zamaraeva, 2011: 815).

Depending on the reasons and purposes of these people stay in Siberia formed their perceptions and stereotypes of the region, shaped their strong opinion on the lifestyle of local inhabitants. These stereotypes, in turn, determined the behavioural style, influencing the relations between people. The existing stereotypes facilitated to explain and understand the new conditions of existence the people were compelled to. The problem was only in the extent to which these patterns reflected an objective reality, as they were mostly generated by those whom Siberia turned to become a confined destination. And then, the stereotypes though consciously or subconsciously, generated a negative perceptions of the region as a whole. Thus, the stereotype of appearance, as a subliminal message, affected interpersonal relations. The prisoners were surrounded by gendarmes, people with low moral culture, and often unattractive look, so as they were attributed all the vices and weaknesses, contributing to firm negative personal perception.

The existing significant differences between the regions had added to the core principle of the stereotyping. The information about these people reached the central Russia through the publications in the newspapers and the personal impressions and experiences of those who visited Siberia. In these cases the formation of the social stereotype was conducted through psycho-semantic approach, implemented through the paradigm of subjective

understanding, that is, all the knowledge, all the information about something was obtained through an intermediary-recipient. Such obtained information carried the experience of the spiritual life of another person. The reconstruction of being was carried out through the construction of subjective semantic spaces. (Petrenko, 2006: 56) However, such sources of information may not always be objective, and thus, the stereotypes formed on the basis of the sources were not always true and accurate. N. Yadrintsev in one of his essays writes that “the exiled and exilic poetry receives the impression of a subjective sensation, transmits a picture of the country based on single experiences, the country for exile is drawn entirely other guess, he was always elegizing, whining and venting spleen in his hatred upon the destination of the exile. His sympathies in another country. Under these conditions, the country cannot inspire a singer whereas a poet will forever remain alien to it” (Kolosov, 1906: 217). Regionalists also noted that the existing cultural and historical differences have contributed to the development of relations between the regions. The inhabitants of European Russia had the stereotype perception of Siberia as a raw material market and a culturally and economically weak region. It reflected, in their opinion, the model of the “relations of European conquistadors to the aborigines”, the conquistadors “deprived them of humanity, fully identifying with the flora and fauna”, that “gave them the right to act against them on the basis of the presumption of complete moral freedom to satisfy their own interests” (Emelyanov-Lukyanchikov, 2004: 124). N. Yadrintsev’s conviction in the existence of special Siberian regional anthropological and cultural-psychological type laid in the basis of his idea about cultural identity of Siberia. Regionalists acknowledged that the Siberian issue could be resolved only with the change of relations between regions that in turn was directly related

to the change of stereotype perception of Siberia by whole Russia (Asoyan, 2012: 30).

Coming to Siberia with definite world outlook, the exiled got what they had expected to see. People tend to easily generalize isolated facts, and translate them to the status of laws. Moreover, such generalization leads to the fact that even insignificant differences are tremendously exaggerated. The information that proves the stereotype contributes to its sustainability, while some inconsistency is often ignored. Some single examples of inconsistencies with the stereotype can co-exist, even contributing to its stability. Stereotypes affect the human mentality, behaviour, interpretation of events, and thereby acquire a social meaning. In determining a human behaviour, stereotypes attribute this behaviour by certain factors and reasons. From this point of view, some facts from the biography of V.G.Korolenko who refused to take an “oath of allegiance” to the new tsar, and in 1881 was exiled to Yakutia may stir a great interest. Having crossed the whole Siberia as the exiled, V.G. Korolenko was closely interacted with the convicts both vagabonds and political. The main characters of his stories were real living people, that definitely contribute to confidence and true of the described experiences from these meetings. A talented writer V.G. Korolenko was able to create an image of Siberia in his stories, which reflected the awareness of the author and its stereotypical perception by the people who surrounded the writer.

The social significance of creative activity of V.G.Korolenko for Siberia is truly invaluable. Having worked for more than 20 years in the magazine “Russkoye Bogatstvo” (Russian Wealth), in St. Petersburg he gave coverage to diversity aspects of Siberian life. The magazine published various scientific, political, and literary materials. The exiled sent materials to the editor about the conditions of stay in exile, the magazine

assisted with fundraising for the needs of Siberia, for the benefit of the unemployed, the exiled and prisoners. Contributions came from Kurgan, Chita, Krasnoyarsk, Minusinsk.

Performing communication functions, the magazine has been one of a few informative sources, through which the inhabitants of the central Russia formed their own perception of Siberia, that is, the magazine promoted the creation of a realistic stereotypical image of the region. Siberia, in turn, thanks to the magazine could express their needs, share problems in hope to be heard by the Russian public and the authorities. Importance of the press, journalism and literature as a tool of social influence can not be underestimated during exploration of the problems of the Russian society. Press greatly helped to increase its liberalization, encouraging the government to be imbued with the public interests (Hevrolina, 2004: 167).

Realizing the great importance of the magazine for the cultural life of the region, the Siberians were actively involved in its publishing destiny. When in 1904, a member of the editorial board of "Russkoye Bogatstvo" (Russian Wealth) N.K. Michailovsky had died, the letters and telegrams of sympathy poured in from Siberia together with donations for a memorial to him. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary V.G.Korolenko received a cordial welcome from the editions of "Sibirskaya Zhizn" (Siberian Life), "Sibirskiy Vestnik" (Siberian Gazette) from the readers of Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, Chita. Such a close relationship and support to the magazine from the Siberians showed their confidence in the editorial staff, the agreeing with the position of the magazine in highlighting the issues and problems regarding the life of Siberia. Therefore we can assume that the materials published on the pages of publications had greatly contributed to the formation of the objective image of Siberia and the influence on the formation of stereotypes

of the region of the readers of the European part of Russia. It was also promoted by the range of the aspects that were covered on its pages. They were related to public education, land-planning and management, the issues of justice, the destiny of native minorities of Siberia, exile and migration. Journalistic publications and fiction had also greatly contributed to realistic image of Siberia in readers. The authors were often the Siberians, who knew the insight of the life of Siberia. For them Siberia was a part of their life so were their works with almost no romance but essay of everyday life. On the pages of the "Russkoye Bogatstvo" published Siberian poets G. Vyatkin, P. Jakubowicz, writers S. Elpatievsky, W. Tan-Bogoraz, and it was V.G.Korolenko who did the review of those works, thereby contributing to the qualitative development of the Siberian fiction. The magazine had also encouraged the writers who had learned Siberian through their exile experience e.g. S. Shvetsov, N. Ann. C. Chudnovsky, who was exiled to the Yenisei province, wrote about the need for judicial reform in Siberia, as there was virtually no justice. W. Aref wrote about the school education that dramatically fell behind time, as church schools were only sponsored by the local population.

The stereotypical image of Siberia was formed just by hearsay. We can trace the story thanks to the article of S. Florovsky "To the chronicle the migrant movement in Siberia for the last few years." published in 1901 in a magazine. The author reports that annually 11-18% migrants move back from Siberia i.e. three out of ten thousand families. He wrote: "The returnees look so depressed... They share the most incredible horror of stories about Siberian edge, and no surprising that those migrants to Siberia, having heard that horrible stories, give up and come back out of the way" (Siberian Page), 1987: 47).

Thus, we may conclude that one of the sources of the stereotypical understanding of

Siberia were the mass media publications in the magazines that gave the coverage of the life of the region. However, you just cannot deny the role of hearsays in forming the perception of the stereotypical image of Siberia, the corrosive effects of which enhanced by implicit faith had an immense impact and spread.

The territorial remoteness and long prison terms had also affected the perception of Siberia as a death-trap destination to get back from which was virtually impossible. In his diary V.G. Korolenko writes about an officer who reported that he had seen many people to Siberia but had not met them back from that destination. The destiny of Jacob Freezer is noteworthy in this respect. The son of the Jew exiled to Siberia, he became the major goldminer, “distinguished by wealth”, patron, philanthropist, was well-known outside of Siberia. But when Ya. Freezer, being 10 years in the first guild merchant class, submitted the application for the right to live everywhere in the empire, it was refused because he belonged to the category of exiles (Kalmina, 2006: 144). N.M Astyrev, a researcher and a journalist in his book “Na Tagiezhnykh Progalinakh” (On Taiga Clearings) about the Siberian peasants adds more evidence to generic nature of Siberia perception as a place of complete or partial neglect. He was also in correspondence with V. G. Korolenko. As Siberia had attracted his attention, therefore, taking the advantage of the invite from the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, N.M Astyrev in 1887, arrived in Irkutsk, where he headed the Statistical Committee. By participating in expeditions to the eastern Siberia, he had been collecting material for his books, which encompassed information on statistics, sociology, ethnography and folklore. N. M. Astyrev is closely associated with the exiled in Irkutsk, and thus his perception of Siberia may well have been very typical of them. In his letters to V.G. Korolenko, he writes: “So beautiful may Siberia be, it is the destination of obscurity. Woe

had lost in its taiga, tundra and steppes! ... Too soon their beloved who stayed of the other side of “the Stone” forget them. Further, N. M. Astyrev writes that he does not even speak of himself, but “broadly generalizes,” although he could be a particular example to prove the general rule for these things” (an issue of “Sibirskie Stranitsy”(Siberian Pages), 1987: 97). Despair, hopelessness and fear capture a human mind and even a possibility of being exiled to Siberia, could not but come true when meeting it. The existence of the perception stereotype formed an emotional state of persistent depression and had led to grave results. The author of the article “Rysskaya Ssylka” (Russian Exile) C. Dizhur published in the journal “Russkoye Bogatstvo”(Russian Wealth), writes that “high mortality rate in Siberia is due to huge mortality rate exclusively among the exiled (in 1892 the mortality rate in European part of Russia was thirty –eight deceased of one thousand inhabitants verses the forty-four decease in Siberia) (Dizhur, 1900).

V.G. Korolenko’s perception of Siberia can be considered typical for many exiled. Having crossed virtually all the Siberian region as a part of the prisoner transport the writer had the opportunity to closely interact with fellow prisoners. In his works, diaries, and letters the talented writer conveys their impressions to the readers. V.G. Korolenko recalls that the exiled in Irkutsk literally pounced on him with questions, and listened eagerly to everything he said. People when isolated from public life, were so excited to learn at least some pieces of information about what is going on outside of their detention. The writer describes his emotional state in the story “Sokolivets.” He writes about a state of mind “when all the grief so powerfully captured the heart, when the “strange land “ is so hostile and blows all its gloom and chill on you, when all these mountains, forests and endless steppes crushingly dominate with menacingly anxious imagination

immeasurably, irresistible space, which lays between you and all the beloved, distant, lost, that so relentlessly attracts ... And the suppressed grief raises its head among dead calmness and in the darkness, whispering so clearly that terrible fateful words: “ forever... in the grave, forever ...” (Korolenko, 1953-1956, Vol. 1: 131-132). Such an emotional state depended on a human, on his attitude to the reality that surrounded him. Without changing his attitude to surrounding environment and perception of reality, which became stereotypic, made it impossible to get out of the impasse. Many were never able to overcome it. The state of chronic depression often pushed the people to an inadequate acts. In his “*Istoriya Moego Sovremennica* (A Story of My Contemporaries),” Korolenko writes that they literally was thunderstruck by the rumor that the exiled Bagin strangled his wife, and then poisoned himself. The exiled A. Pavlov committed suicide, having left note, “died of grief and idleness (Krotov, 1925: 43). The writer considered himself guilty in this death, since was not able to understand the mood of a fellow victim, and provided no moral support. In “*Stories of My Contemporary*” V.G. Korolenko tells how desperate the Polish rebels were “having lost all contacts and support of their homeland.” Strife and squabbles were growing while the moral principles of the Polish convicts were overturning (Korolenko, 1985: 288). The rejection of another way of life, reluctance to adapt to local conditions, led to depression, emotional breakdowns. V.G. Korolenko himself was a businesslike man, with a steady system of values and beliefs, but even he experienced a period of discouragement. The poem “*Za Dveriyu*” (Behind the door) written in Tobolsk prison reflected the desperate mood of the writer.

Work saved him from the depression of “idleness” during his residence at a penal colony settlement. He writes to his brother Illarion to

city Glasov, that in the winter he sews boots, and in the summer he is engaged in agriculture. “So – I learned to plow, harrow, mow and even press ... I have a horse. In addition to these ...we are hunting hairs in the the forest “(Korolenko, 1935: 171-173). The writer was also involved in teaching activities, teaching boys of a local resident Afanasieva to read and write, he also collected and wrote down the Yakut native songs, kept a diary, he kept records for each postal station, which he passed, collecting statistics about its population, its property and the state payroll, was an active correspondence with Russian magazines. The hope to come back to Russia, the desire to understand the local lifestyle, an attempt to attract the attention of the Russian public to the problems of Siberia, the awareness in this the importance of his activities, kept V.G. Korolenko going by giving his a chance to overcome the stereotypes and find the positive sides in this situation.

Total cultural and psychological perception of Siberia by people, who by the will of fate found themselves at this remoteness destination, can be understood by tracing the fate of the characters in the V.G. Korolenko’s works. The writer often focuses on the psychological details of the behaviour of his characters. Common to them is the change of perception of the world around that occurs to them when crossing the border with Siberia. This is due, first of all with a sense of cultural and psychological distance, which is manifested in alienation, in the rejection of everything “strange”. This antagonistic commonality and utter disbelief in a possibility of reasonable changes for the better programmed the basics of behaviour of these people. Humility, resignation to fate loss of faith – these features are embodied in the image of Makar, the character created by the writer in the story “*Makar’s Dream*.” He was a host of the yurt, where the writer Zahar a Russian

immigrant who adopted Yakut manners lived. Resignation, the feeling that he has no choice and chance to change the life, as everybody has the same life, ground Makar to total savagery and complete abandonment. By creating a construct of a settler, V.G. Korolenko was able to show the dreadful habit to this dark and dirty life. People got used to it and they thought it was forever. The desire of the writer to go into the details of better understanding of life processes, sparked a strong interest in him in the human psyche. The stereotypical setting out in a human that he has no choice, deprives indeed a human of the right to choose, and the power of tradition creates a psychological basis for passive obedience to the established lifestyle in the mind the conviction that it is forever. V.G. Korolenko shows that even honest people in such circumstances, are doomed to gradually and imperceptibly lose the sense of foulness that is happening around. Another his short story "The Feudal Lords," tells us a story of some public officers who came from the central Russia to Siberia to execute certain state duties, though in fact, arranged their own private matters. The full tragedy of the same degeneration of the human mind, which the writer experiences personally, he describes in his story "Iskushenie" (Temptation). "I clearly realized that I, Vladimir Korolenko is now dying. I will be really dead, or rather transform into a midcult ignorant creature Ivan Ivanov, prosecuted, angry, doomed to drag out a miserable existence, full of unknown adventure and mystery. And I felt that it would be no me any more. My fate will lead me the road, which is alien to me and unpleasant" (Korolenko, 1980: 170). The tragedy of this transformation was that just revenge was left for the embittered human. The revenge for everything that has killed the human in him that made him a philistine Ivanov. The mindset that nothing can be changed and everything that happens – is forever that completely ruins and maims the

souls. Luckily, V.G. Korolenko, being a man of strong will, was able to survive this hardships preserving his personal ego, but many failed. Speaking of his meeting with an employee Stepan (his story "Marusiya's Zaimka" (Marusya's Lodge), who lived in Siberia for 15 years, the writer underlined how terrified he was with all this hopelessness, having lost even its sorrow" that he felt in Stephan's response to the question, why he did not leave Siberia". In a conversation with a ploughman Timokha, V.G. Korolenko asked him if he receives a letter from Russia. Timokha replies: "No letter can reach this neck of wood! Too far, bro! Chased we were and driven, ooh, my God! What letters!". The perceptions of Siberia as something alien and hostile, made the people's lives there intolerably difficult, and the realization that is forever, deprived it of its meaning. For the Siberian Russia was also strange and foreign. In the story "Ubivets" (Murderer) V.G. Korolenko tells the story of his meeting at a postal station with the superintendent Vasily Ivanovich, who for his free-thinking philosophical thoughts was downgraded the carrier ladder. When in due time he was offered a "decent place in Russia," he replied, "No, sir, thank you, I can not ... I cannot, sir! What can I do there? All is foreign my interests. «Siberians way of thinking and understanding was different and this perception served the basis for the formation of the stereotype "friend or foe" and it does not matter, which social group they represent. And if Siberian people had their own concept of native land with positive treats, the "image of Siberia in the Russian mass consciousness possessed the stable stereotypes: "Siberia is a colony", "raw materials appendage", "place of penal servitude and exiles" (Vinokurova, 2012: 224). In the story "Sokolinets" V.G. Korolenko described his acquaintance with Basil hobo, who tells him how to hit in Siberia. When the gang was solving what Vasily should do, the old man, a member of the

farm said: "Hey you punks, you don't think out way! You judge in raseyske (the way of thinking and lifestyle in the central Russia), and I'm in the local. I know the local orders ..." And even the Siberian landscape described in the story "At-Davan," that had to conquer the minds with its grandeur and beauty, produces a depressing effect. Describing his journey along the Lena River, V.G. Korolenko wrote that it "completely slopes are dotted with dense wood carrion. The closest you can see the corpses of trees covered with snow, with torn from the ground, frantically twisted roots. "Only the plain wood "is a long, dark, funereal border" (V.G. Korolenko, 1980: 176). We believe that such comparisons can shape only in the imagination of a human being in a certain emotional mood.

The formed social stereotypes created a belief in a human, which is often stronger than his

will. Consciousness is the part of a creative force. Thinking can be both creative or destructive, we can pull towards what we want or vice versa what really do not want to. The stereotype of perception of Siberia, based on the destructive thinking, deprived a human of moral power. Broken-hearted people had fallen into line with failures, losers and suicides, insane. The laws of psychology, being as objective as the laws of physics and mathematics are the evidence for that the mental attitude to something created by a belief in the stereotype defines the behaviour of people. Impact of social stereotypes of Siberia on the people who were came to Siberia against their good will discussed in this paper in the context of the analysis of creative activity V.G. Korolenko, who has always paid attention to the psychological state of his characters, confirms the correctness of the conclusions reached.

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Влияние социальных стереотипов на восприятие Сибири жителями Европейской России в XIX в.

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В статье рассмотрены вопросы формирования стереотипов восприятия Сибири жителями Европейской части России, показано влияние этих стереотипов на установление социально-психологических связей между различными социальными группами. Данные проблемы анализируются на примере творчества В.Г. Короленко, в произведениях которого наиболее ярко отразилось образно-стереотипное восприятие Сибири самого автора и людьми, которые окружали его во время политической ссылки конца XIX века.

Ключевые слова: В.Г. Короленко, культура, Россия, Сибирь, стереотипы, ссылка.
